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ERIC AND THORA

By the Author of

"ST PETER'S DAY"



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# ERIC AND THORA.

A Story for Children,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“ST. PETER’S DAY.”

“ Let no earth-stain thy robe of glory mar ;  
Wrap it around thy bosom undefiled :  
Yet spread it daily in the clear Heaven’s light,  
To be new-bathed in its own native light.”  
*Lyra Innocentium.*

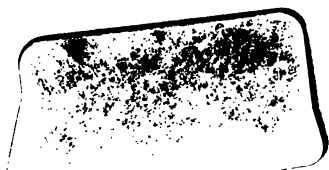


LONDON :  
MOZLEY AND SMITH,  
6, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1878.



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for Thora and Eric, nobody would have noticed the child.

When they arrived at the castle, Thora's first thought was of her rescued guest. Eric had told her in a few words all that he had learnt concerning her, and, satisfied to find that she did not belong to Thiodolf's enemies, Thora was ready to receive her as a new sister. She had often longed for one, and she rejoiced at the strange chance which seemed to have come on purpose to fulfil her wish. She led her into the great hall of the castle, where the serving-maidens were preparing supper for the young chief and his men; and taking her into a wide-spreading window, her own favourite seat, she began to talk and to try and comfort her.

"Don't cry," said she, "you shall be my sister and Eric's, and we will take you to our favourite cave in the rock, and you shall see the falcon Eric tamed. But you are not listening," continued she, in a disappointed tone.

The stranger-child looked up on hearing the change in her companion's voice. She put her hand in hers and spoke slowly, as

though in a tongue to which she was not accustomed—

“You are kind,” she said, and her voice was very sweet, Thora thought, “you are kind; but I must cry a little, because all my people are gone, and though you are kind, you know you are a stranger too.”

“Oh, but I will be your sister,” said Thora eagerly; “you will not call me a stranger then, and Eric will be your brother; he is so kind and brave, and he will take care of you as he does of me.”

“The cruel men killed my dear sister, and carried me away; if my brother had been at home he would have protected us. Alas, alas,” and the child’s tears fell fast.

“Are you not glad you are here with me?” said Thora, “and that my brother has killed those wicked men? How glad you must have been! I almost think I would have got a sword and fought too if I had been you.”

“Oh no,” said the child, “I was not glad they were killed, but I am glad I am with you and not with them. If only Father Clement could have been saved too.”

"Was that the old man who was with you, was he your father?"

"No, not my father; but he has taught me always, and he saved my life when the men burnt our castle and killed my sister, and then they took us prisoners."

"Who killed him?" asked Thora.

"One of the men who had taken us was wounded and was lying on the ground, and one of your men came with a spear to kill him, and Father Clement ran between them, so the spear struck him instead, and he died."

"But why did he do that?" asked Thora. "I should have thought he would rather have helped to kill him."

"Oh no, he never fought."

"Why not? was he a coward?" said Thora wonderingly.

"Oh no, he was braver than any one I ever knew."

"Then why did not he kill the man instead of trying to save him?"

"It would not have been very brave to kill a wounded man," said the child.

"But did not he want to be revenged on

him for killing your sister and burning your castle ? ”

“ Oh no, it would not have been right.”

“ What can you mean, you strange girl ; I never heard any one speak so before ! But tell me your name and where you come from ; you do not speak like us.”

“ My name is Hilda,” said the child, “ and I come from a very long way off. Our castle was near the sea, and my brother and all his men had been summoned away to a meeting of the nobles. There was only my sister, myself, and a few serving-men in the castle, for we thought of no danger ; but the Northmen landed and set fire to our castle ; our men fought bravely, but they were too few. The Northmen rushed in ; they killed my sister as she was kneeling in the chapel, and they would have killed me too, but they did not see me ; Father Clement was succouring the wounded. I do not know how long I was in the chapel ; I did not know what they did then, for I was lying crying by my dear sister, when I saw it was all on fire, and Father Clement came through the flames and caught me up

and carried me back through them, and we left the burning castle. Afterwards some of the men came by, and there was no place for us to hide. I suppose they were tired of killing people, for they took us with them as prisoners to their ships. They were very cruel to us though, and I was very much frightened ; but Father Clement helped me to bear it, and he was so patient, that I was ashamed not to try and be patient too. We had not long landed when we saw your troop coming, and the men who were with us made ready to fight, and you know the rest."

"Poor little Hilda," said Thora tenderly, "you shall be happy now you have come to us. My father and my brothers are great warriors, and you will be quite safe here."

"Oh yes, I know I am safe," said the child. "I am safe always," she continued, dreamingly looking up into the starry sky.

Thora looked at her, as she had looked before, wondering ; and then it struck her that Hilda must be very weary, and she said, "Come with me to Gudrun, my dear old nurse, and she shall put us to sleep. She

tells us such stories when we are going to sleep, of Brynhild, the spear-maiden, and Sigurd, the serpent-slayer. Oh you will like it. Come," and she led her friend up the turret-stair. "Gudrun shall give us some supper," she said; "I like not the supper with all the warriors in the hall when I am tired, there is such a noise."

"See, Gudrun, I have found a little sister," she said to the old woman; "she shall sleep with me, and you shall tell us stories when we have had our supper."

"Ah, I heard something of this," said Gudrun. "Poor little one, she looks weary; Eilif told me how you found her."

The old woman looked so kind and motherly that the heart of the desolate child warmed to her at once, and she smiled at Gudrun when she patted her head, while Thora looked on, well pleased to see that her protégée had made a favourable impression, for Gudrun was a person of much importance in the household.

The rest of the time was taken up with Thora telling Gudrun how they had spent the day; and now the girls were ready for

their bed. Thora saw Hilda kneeling by the window ; her lips were moving, and her eyes were full of tears.

"What are you doing?" cried she ; "are you saying spells? There is no need here, old Gudrun has put a charm upon this door, and no evil spirits can enter."

"No, I was not saying spells," said Hilda, "I was saying my prayers."

"To whom?" said Thora ; "the Temple of Odin is far from here, he cannot hear you."

"No, not to Odin, but to the great God Who made Heaven and earth, and He can hear me everywhere, and He can do everything."

Thora wondered again.

"Who is the God Who made Heaven and earth?" she said at last, in a tone full of awe. "I never heard of any gods but Odin, and Thor, and Baldur, and they only care for brave warriors, not for little children like us."

"There is only one God," said Hilda, "and He cares for us all, and He can hear us when we pray to Him, and He will hear

us because we are His children, and He loves us."

"Who told you all this?" asked Thora;  
"I never heard any one speak so before."

"Father Clement taught me much, and my dear sister."

"But God could not have cared for them," said Thora, "or He would not have let them be killed; if He is as powerful as you say He is," she added.

"Oh yes, He did care for them, and they have gone to be with Him for ever, and they will be happier than they ever could be on earth," said Hilda.

"Then why do you cry so?" asked Thora.

"I cry because they are gone away from me, and I shall not see them for such a long time perhaps; but I *shall* see them again one day, if I keep my white robe clean."

"What do you mean?" said Thora;  
"you speak so strangely; yet I like what you say. Will you teach me what the old man taught you?"

"Oh yes," said Hilda, "as well as I can."

I will tell you all I know, and then perhaps some day you will have a white robe too."

"You shall teach me to-morrow then, dear sister," said Thora; "and now we will go to sleep."

When Thora awoke on the following morning she saw that Hilda was already dressed, and that she was kneeling by the little window as she had knelt the night before. Remembering their conversation over night she would not interrupt her, but got up very softly and dressed too.

When Hilda rose from her knees she kissed her, and looked with wonder at her new sister—at the calm, steadfast light in her eyes, which seemed to come from some inward source of happiness which she could not fathom. Thora could not have put these thoughts into words, but they troubled her, and as she gazed she felt almost an awe of Hilda, as if she were above the world.

"You will not forget your promise," she said. "We will go down to the rocks, and

Eric shall come too, and you will teach us there."

But there was a great hunting party arranged, and though Eric did not go to battle yet he was considered old enough to hunt, in order that he might get inured to danger and hardy ways, for all the young Northmen learnt to hunt the wild boar, and the wolf, and the savage bear, that they might grow brave and strong, and ready to attack other foes when the time came.

So Thora and Hilda went to the rocks alone. There was a lovely little cove, which Eric and Thora almost considered their own. The smooth white sand spread down to the water's edge, and fantastic rocks of a pale green and lilac encircled it on all sides. A very steep path led down to it, and half way down was the cave Thora had spoken of the night before.

The rocks were arched and hollowed out till it looked like a fairy palace, and the blue water, with a white edge of surf, splashed lazily backwards and forwards; sea-birds screamed as they wheeled above or bathed their white wings in the azure

water, or rocked themselves to and fro upon the waves.

"And did your God make the sea too, and the rocks?" asked Thora, looking up into Hilda's face as she reclined on the sand at her feet.

"Yes, He made everything; and He made you and me, and all living creatures as well," and then Hilda went on and told Thora many things, but she could not tell her all at once, for she thought she would not understand if she told her too much.

"And does this great God care for little children? Thor only cares for brave, strong men; he will have them in his Golden Hall when they die bravely, and they will hunt and feast for ever."

"Thor was a great warrior," said Hilda; "but he is dead now, and he can do nothing; you must remember that, Thora. There is only one God, and He loves us all, little children and all, and He sent His Son to die for us. But He did not die like Thor, for He rose from death again that we might rise too and live with Him for ever."

"What did you mean by the white robe you spoke of last night?" asked Thora.

"Oh, I wish Father Clement was here to teach you," said Hilda, "he could tell you so much better than I can, and he would give it to you too, as he did to me when I was a little baby."

"Tell me about it," said Thora.

And Hilda told her how when she was a little infant she had been bathed in the waters of baptism, and born anew of water and the Holy Spirit, and how she had been made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. All this and more she told her, and Thora listened eagerly, and longed exceedingly that she too might be a partaker in these blessings.

"Do you think, Hilda, if I pray to God to let me be baptised, and be His child, that He will be able to hear me?" she asked.

And Hilda answered that He surely could, and she said that she would pray too that the gift might be bestowed on Thora.

And Thora longed earnestly for Eric to hear what Hilda had taught her; but during the days that Thiodolf remained in the castle there was no time nor opportunity, for Eric was engaged in warlike exercises with the other youths in the castle, so he was less with his sister, though when for a minute they met, he would give her a bright smile or a caress, for he loved Thora better than anything in the world.

At last Thiodolf set out upon a new expedition, and the castle was deserted except by the usual garrison, and the children. Then Thora asked her brother to come to the rocks with them, and listen to what Hilda had told her. And Eric listened and believed as Thora had done, for his spirit was teachable and earnest, and he had often felt a vague longing for something to rest upon, something truer and greater than he had ever known or been taught.

So the little stranger-girl had brought light to these two heathen children, and Thora's kindness had gained her a blessing she had never dreamed of. But the

light was yet imperfect, the blessing but begun.

Thora and Hilda went to the rocks one bright morning. The tide was unusually low, and they went round the rocks which generally formed their boundary.

"What is that on the sand?" said Hilda, pointing to a dark object some distance off.

"It looks like some one lying down. Oh how I wish Eric were here."

"Let us go and see," said Hilda, and they went.

As they came nearer they could see that it was indeed the body of a man, cast on the shore by the tide, as they at first thought, but soon they saw it moved a little, and when they were near enough to distinguish the features, Thora cried out in a voice of terror:

"Come away, Hilda; it is Svend, the enemy of Thiodolf, the man who burnt your brother's castle."

"Nay, Thora, he is wounded, perhaps dying, we cannot leave him thus," said Hilda, still approaching; "we must try to help him."

It was indeed as she said, Svend was

desperately wounded. Hilda drew near, and taking the kerchief from her neck she tried to staunch the blood which was flowing rapidly from his wound.

"Go," she said to Thora, who stood by looking askance at her brother's enemy, "see if you can get some one to help carry him to the castle."

"What would be the use?" said Thora; "he is our deadly enemy, not one from the castle would do aught but make the death-wound sure. And you!" she added in a tone of wonder, "did he not slay your dear sister? how can you bear to tend him thus?"

"Hush," said Hilda, "do not speak of that, have I not told you Christians must not seek revenge? he is wounded, he is suffering, we must only think of that. Oh, Thora, go and call for help. Eilif will do anything you order, and we may hide him, and he may die in peace, if he is too sorely wounded to live."

Thora could not resist Hilda's pleading voice.

"Are you not afraid to stay," said she;

"it will be some time before I can go to the castle and return?"

"Oh no, I am not afraid," said Hilda; "we cannot leave him to die alone. Oh, go quickly, dear Thora."

And Thora went; she knew that Eilif, the husband of her dear old nurse Gudrun, would do anything she begged of him, and yet to beg for help for Svend, Thiodolf's great enemy, the most cruel and revengeful chief in all that region, seemed so strange, she hardly knew how to do it. But Hilda's lessons came back to her, and most of all Hilda's example, and the picture of her bending tenderly over the man who had slain all her kindred whom she so loved impressed Thora, and she ran, hardly seeing the sharp rocks over which she bounded in her haste to reach the castle.

Eilif was not there, and she had to seek him in the forest, and when she found him and had told her errand more than an hour had passed. The tide would be up, Hilda could not move the wounded man, Thora knew she would not leave him, and in an agony of fear for her friend, Thora hurried on

with old Eilif and Eric, whom she had also met, and told them all that had happened as they went along. At length they reached the reef of rocks, but neither Hilda or the wounded man were to be seen. They called, they shouted, there was no answer, no sound but the waves beating upon the rocks and breaking in thunder upon the beach. Thora and Eric climbed the rocks and ran hither and thither, but nothing could they see of their lost companion. They never saw her any more, and at last went sadly back to the castle. Old Eilif thought the tide had carried her away, but Thora felt sure it had not reached the spot where she had left her ; but they could see and hear nothing, and the children sometimes felt as though Hilda had been an angel, such as she had often told them of, who had been sent to show them the way to Heaven ; so they treasured her words and grew up different from the wild heathens around them ; their one earnest desire to receive in baptism the white robe of which she had spoken.

Eric was brave and fearless, and soon he was chosen to lead a band of his country-

men, who were bent on an expedition to conquer some foreign land. Old Sibert was away too, and Thiodolf; and so it came to pass that Thora was alone in the castle with but a scanty guard. It was just at this time that some of the numerous enemies of her father and brothers chose to attack the castle. The faithful serving-men tried in vain to defend it; their numbers were too few; and the enemies entered the castle, carried off Thora, and were engaged in setting it on fire, when an alarm was given that Sibert's vessels were in sight. All was now hurry and confusion among Kolbiorn's troop, for they knew they should have no chance against the great warrior Sibert; so, after doing all the mischief they could, they hurried away taking Thora with them; and when old Sibert and his warriors—having been warned by the smoke in the direction of the castle that something was wrong—arrived, he found the stronghold in flames, his men slain and his daughter gone, none knew whither. The men succeeded in putting out the fire and saving part of the

castle. They found old Gudrun insensible in one of the turrets, and all she could say when she came to herself was, that the men had seized her young lady, and that when she clung to her they had given her a blow which stunned her, and she knew no more until their own people had found her. Only one thing gave them hope, and that was that they could not find Eilif among the slain. Sibert knew he would not desert Thora while life remained to him, and as soon as he could, with all the followers he could collect, he set off to besiege the castle of Kolbiorn, for there he doubted not he should find his daughter. It was a strong tower situated on a high rock, and few of the northern warriors would have cared to undertake the siege ; but Sibert was known and feared, and many chiefs responded to his call. The tower was strong, but at length the besiegers gained an entrance. Sibert sought high and low for his daughter without success ; and at length one of the wounded defenders of the castle being questioned said that Kolbiorn, fearing an attack from Sibert, had put to sea with his

prisoners, and that it would be many months before he returned.

The tower was set on fire ; and, weeping with grief and rage, Sibert turned with his followers to leave the place, when a grievous cry arrested him ; it seemed to come from the earth, and upon its being repeated he signed to some of his men to see whence it came. They soon became aware of a grating in the rock which they quickly hacked away with their swords, while a voice from within entreated their aid, which they soon recognised as that of Eilif, their old comrade. They quickly let down ropes to raise him from the dungeon in which he had been confined. Pale and gaunt from famine and wounds, and half-blinded by the light of day, he appeared as one risen from the grave. He staggered towards Sibert crying, " Oh, my dear lord and chief," and fell fainting upon the ground.

When he revived enough to be questioned, Sibert and the rest asked for news of Thora. All he could say was that he had followed the troop, which had carried her off, in hopes of bringing tidings to her

father of the place of her captivity ; but having been discovered, and disabled by a wound in the right arm, he was thrown into the dungeon, where he had been left to starve, and he would no doubt soon have died, had not he been roused by hearing the war-cry of his chief. He had waited anxiously until the sounds of fighting had ceased, and he had just had strength to utter the cry which had attracted the attention of Sibert.

As the sorrowful party returned to the half-burnt fortress of the chief they met Eric coming joyfully home from his first warlike excursion ; his fair hair flowed over his shoulders, his armour glittered in the sunshine, his blue eye flashed as he rode forward to meet his father ; but, alas, his joy was soon turned to grief. His dearly-loved sister was no longer there to welcome him. Sibert had grieved for her loss, but his grief was slight in comparison to that of Eric.

“ We must seek her,” he said.

“ But where, my son ? ” said Sibert mournfully ; “ the sea is wide, who can

follow the track of a vessel that sailed four days ago? we may never see Thora again, but we will give our lives to revenge her. Let us swear," continued the old warrior, turning round to his followers, "let us swear undying vengeance to the house of Kolbiorn."

All with one voice replied, "We swear it."

Only Eric's voice was not heard; a great struggle took place in the soul of the young warrior. Hilda's lessons, Thora's words since Hilda's disappearance, the light he had endeavoured, though blindly, to follow since his childhood, withheld his lips from the vow of vengeance. But no one observed it, and he wandered away to the rocks where he and Thora had loved to sit, and throwing himself down upon the earth, all his soul went forth in supplication to Hilda's God, Whom he knew so dimly, but yet believed in.

In the mean time Kolbiorn had put to sea, taking Thora and a few other prisoners with him, for he feared to stay within reach of Sibert's vengeance. He was a savage pirate, with very few of the virtues which

were often possessed by the northern warriors. His anger against Sibert had been roused by Thiodolf, the son of the latter, having discovered him in some treacherous proceedings which had brought on him the contempt and enmity of the neighbouring chiefs, and Thora knew she had little mercy to expect at his hands ; but as yet he had been occupied in the bustle of departure, and she had seen but little of him. The war-ship of the Viking was but little fitted for the home of a delicately-nurtured maiden. But Thora was brave and fearless, and cared little for hardships ; she feared much worse than the inevitable discomfort of the voyage. She prayed earnestly, however, to the Christian's God, and she doubted not but that He would hear her, although she was not His child as Hilda had been, and she was comforted and patient.

The second day she saw that something unusual was going on, and she found that an attack on some vessel was meditated. Hidden among some boxes and barrels, Thora watched the fight, and she soon became aware that her captors were getting

the worst. When the combat had ended, Kolbiorn and the few of his followers who remained alive were chained together by the strangers, who, unknowing that she was a captive, placed Thora among them. She could not understand their language, but from what Kolbiorn and the rest let fall she guessed that they had attacked the stranger vessel, expecting an easy prey, but that they had been disappointed, finding it armed and full of warriors; and now they had no hope but to be sold as slaves. This was a grievous lot for the daughter of such a chief as Sibert, and Thora wept bitter tears as she thought of her father, and of Eric, who would so grieve for her. Her heart was too sore for her to notice much that was around her, but after a time she found they were nearing the land, and that they were to be disembarked.

Thora knew not if her slavery was now to begin, but at any rate it was a relief to be on land again, though all was strange to her.

On a high ground near the landing place rose a lofty castle, and to it the warriors who

had taken them led their captives. They were turned into the court of the castle, and Thora threw herself upon the ground, leaning against the wall, and clasping her chained hands together. Kolbiorn and his companions took little notice of her. Suddenly she heard a sound which made her look up, and she saw a tall and graceful lady appear at a little portal which opened upon the court. She carried food and drink, and several maidens followed her, bearing the like. She approached Kolbiorn, who was the nearest to her, and with sweet and gracious looks invited him to partake of what she had brought. Half hidden in her corner, Thora gazed upon her with looks of wonder. "Could it really be? was she dreaming, or, was it indeed her long-lost playfellow and adopted sister?"

As she came towards her she stretched out her arms, and half in terror murmured, "Hilda!"

The lady turned and gazed on her as though in a dream; then the colour rushed over her pale face, and she cried—

"Thora, my sister, oh, can it indeed be

you!" and clasped the captive in her arms.

"These chains! Oh, Thora, how is it? What has happened? where is Eric? your father? How came you with these men?"

"I will tell you; but oh, Hilda, how did you come here? I thought you had been dead long since, under the blue waves; and oh, how I have wept for you."

"Svend's followers came to seek him, and carried me away with them, and I was in his castle many a day. But Svend would let no one hurt me, because I had succoured him when he was wounded. Afterwards the Christians made war upon him, because he had made some of them captives, and so I was restored to my own people, and Sir Ronald, who owns this castle, is now my husband."

"Is your white robe clean still, Hilda?" asked Thora.

Hilda looked grave and said—

"I have sought to keep it so, Thora, and if there are stains upon it they have been washed with tears; but these chains must be taken off, our guest will not deny me."

When Sir Leofric heard that his prisoner

was the adopted sister of the lady of the castle, he quickly ordered that her chains should be struck off. Hilda would have interceded for Kolbiorn and his men, but both Sir Leofric and her husband told her they were birds of prey, that were more harmless in captivity than anywhere else, so she could say no more.

"Oh, Hilda, can I be baptised?" was Thora's first question when her chains had been removed and she was alone with her friend.

"Most surely, my dear one," said the lady of the castle, "I will ask the good chaplain to instruct you, and you shall be baptised directly he thinks fit."

The chaplain found that Thora already believed with all her heart, so he did not think it needful to make her wait long for the blessing for which she had prayed for so many years. A week after she had come to the castle a slave, and almost in despair, Thora knelt in the chapel clothed in the white raiment of her baptism, with the chain of sin which had bound her struck off, as had been the chains of earthly cap-

tivity. Who can tell the blessedness of that moment?

And we who were all baptised in our infancy; do we ever think of the precious gift then granted to us without any effort of our own? Do we ever think what it would be if we were not members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven? if the Holy Spirit had not been poured into our hearts? if we were still in bondage to Satan? Thora's heart burnt with thankfulness and praise; she felt as though her whole life's devotion could never repay the blessing she had received, and she felt the truth.

Soon after this the Bishop came to visit the castle, and Thora was confirmed and admitted to the other Holy Sacrament, and then she felt that she was a full-grown Christian; and at first it seemed as if no greater happiness could be hers on earth, and that it would be well to die; but she thought of her dear brother Eric, who had longed with her for the blessing she had received, and she felt she could gladly wait till he should be too a Christian.

At old Sibert's castle all went on as usual. The winter came, and the red lights flashed in the sky, and Eric would gaze on them and think how Gudrun used to tell him it was Thor's red beard flashing in the heavens. Thiodolf and Eric and their brothers hunted the wild-boar and the bear over the frozen fiords, and all seemed as of old ; but Eric never forgot the sweet sister who had been torn from him, and many and many a plan he formed for finding her again. Nothing, however, was heard of Kolbiorn ; his vessels had never returned, his tower was in ruins, his followers dead or dispersed. What hope could there be of finding Thora again ?

In the spring a party of warriors sought Eric and begged him to take the command of an expedition to find a new country to settle in. Eric consented, for he always hoped to gain tidings of his sister ; and there was another hope which he kept locked up in his own breast, which was to hear more of the Christian's God, and to gain the white robe of which Hilda had spoken.

So he took the command of the vessels and they sailed away. Eric stood with his falcon on his wrist, gazing at the hill behind the castle, whence in their childhood he and Thora had watched their father's ships, and longed for the time when Eric too should be a chief. The time had come, and yet he was no more satisfied than he had been, when as a boy he had looked above into the clear, blue sky, and longed to be greater than all the chiefs around. A voice in his heart seemed to say the time would come, yet what it meant he knew not.

The evening service was about to end in the chapel of the cloister. The last psalm was being sung when a terrified youth rushed into the holy building.

"The Northmen!" he cried in a piercing voice, "the cruel Northmen have landed, and are coming towards the abbey."

All was terror and confusion for some moments, and then the gray-headed Abbot stood forward with his calm, venerable face full of peace.

“Do not be frightened, my children,” he said, “let us go out and meet them ; it may be that the Lord will touch their hearts, and at any rate we can but die. Who will follow me ?”

The brothers crowded round him, and then, bearing a silver cross on high and chanting the sixty-eighth Psalm, the procession went forth to meet the dreaded enemies.

The glittering warriors had landed and were beginning their march. One, his gilded armour flashing in the last rays of the sun, on which his eyes were fixed, rode in front on a noble war-steed. The procession of monks advanced still chanting, and when the sweet sounds reached the ear of the young warrior he made a sign to his followers to halt, while he himself rode on alone. When they came nearer the silver cross caught his eye, and he knew the symbol of the Christian Faith. Then a great flood of thankfulness swept over his spirit, for he felt that now at last that which he had waited for so long was within his reach. He alighted, and one

word to his well-trained horse caused it to stand still, while he advanced and knelt upon the ground. Well might the monks think a miracle had been wrought for their deliverance, when they saw the leader of the dreaded Northmen thus humble himself before the sign of salvation. And truly it was a miracle, that in the midst of the wild heathens the heart of a son of one of their most renowned chiefs had been thus softened and prepared for the light of truth to shine into it. But it was one not wrought all at once, and some people seem to think that a necessary part of a miracle. And so it is that in these days many miracles pass unregarded, which we should confess if our eyes could be opened, and we had faith to see.

So the procession stopped, and the venerable Abbot approached the kneeling warrior.

"Holy Father, may I be baptised?" said Eric.

"Surely you may," said the Abbot, "if you desire so great a blessing ; but are you instructed in the Christian Faith, my son,

or has belief but now come into your heart?"

"I believe in the Lord Christ, and I have long believed, but never till now have I met with a Christian priest. I earnestly desire the white robe of baptism, if I may be allowed to receive it."

Much the good Abbot marvelled at these humble words, but he answered gravely and thoughtfully. He told the young chieftain that he must examine him as to his belief before he admitted him to the holy ordinance, saying it would be best for him to remain in the abbey that night at any rate, that he might be prepared as much as possible.

Eric thankfully accepted the Abbot's proposal, and returning to his followers he told them to re-embark, and wait off the shore for his signal for them to take him again on board. In the mean time he named Siward, his favourite companion, chief during his absence. Something of importance, he said, would detain him. Siward, who knew his anxiety to find Thora, thought that it might be some tidings of her which

had so suddenly changed his plans. But no one questioned him, and he returned to the Abbot, and with him entered the sacred building.

With all his heart did Eric give himself to understand the instructions of the Christian priest. Willingly he would have remained longer, but he could not leave his men without their leader, and he knew that such an opportunity might not occur again.

The Abbot found that he knew the articles of the Christian Faith, and the vows he must take ere he was baptised into the Holy Name. He passed the night in earnest prayer in the porch of the chapel, which till his baptism he might not enter; and early on the following morning, amid the thanksgivings of the brothers, he was admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion. In the midst of all his thankfulness and peace, one longing wish that Thora could share with him half troubled his heart. But even as it arose a voice seemed to whisper to him that in this too all would be well: "Be not afraid, only believe;" and he rested content in the love of the tender Father to Whom

he now had a right to pray, as His own child, and Who would, he knew, hear him, and do what was best for his dear sister, wherever she might be.

However, the time came when he must leave the peaceful brotherhood and join his companions, and he earnestly besought the Abbot to send with him a priest who would instruct such of his men as might be willing to receive the Christian faith. Very gladly did the Abbot grant his request, and one of the brotherhood, an experienced and gentle teacher, accompanied him when he returned to his vessel. But his men were not much disposed to receive the stranger favourably. One of them, Wiglaf, a fierce-spirited warrior, had secretly borne a grudge against Eric ever since he had been detected by him in some lawless outrage which Eric had prevented. The young chief, however, had been too much beloved and too powerful for him openly to show his ill-will; but now he took the opportunity of whispering dark hints about their leader having been bewitched by the chanting monks, and that the man he had brought among them held

some mysterious power over him. In vain his faithful friend Siward contradicted these notions whenever he heard of them, but not the less did they gain credence among the Northmen, who were always ready to ascribe everything to supernatural agency, and for whom every crag or fountain held a gnome or a nix, or some other strange or fearful spirit. A circumstance which occurred soon after their leaving the Abbey confirmed them in their suspicions of Eric.

They had landed one day, and were encamped near the coast, when a loud bay-ing of dogs was heard, and a huge man half naked bounded from a thicket at some distance, and made towards them, followed by two fierce bloodhounds. When he caught sight of their arms and banners he gave a shrill cry, and changed his course, and in the momentary confusion the dogs sprang upon him. Before any of the rest had time to do anything Eric had reached him, and with a mighty blow had stretched one of the furious beasts dead at his feet ; but its companion, seeing this new enemy, left the

fugitive, and made a spring at his throat, and it would have gone hardly with him had not Siward at that instant come up and struck down the animal with his battle-axe. The rescued man instead of endeavouring to aid his preserver had fled faster than before, as soon as he was released from the fangs of the dogs. A richly-dressed knight now appeared, followed by some attendants.

"What do ye," asked he, "killing my dogs, and——"

"How!" interrupted Eric; "is it the custom in this land to hunt men, instead of bears and wolves? I should be truly sorry to interfere with your sport, **but I must take part with my kind.**"

"**Know**, bold stranger, I was not hunting for sport, but this is a runaway slave of mine who needed to be chastised, and you have slain my noble dogs and aided his escape."

"In our land," said Eric disdainfully, "it would be a sin and a shame to hunt a man with dogs as though he were a beast; but go, Sir Knight, for my men like not such sport, and I shall have hard matter

to prevent their making sport of you if you withdraw not quickly."

The knight, seeing the threatening gestures of the wild Northmen, took Eric's advice and turned away, while some of Eric's men who had followed the fugitive, suddenly coming up with him, raised a shout which seemed to betoken more than common excitement, and two of them came running back shouting the name of "Kolbiorn."

No sooner did Eric hear them than with a wild cry he rushed towards the prisoner. It was, indeed, the once mighty Kolbiorn, but so changed by want and misery that but for his shaggy red beard and fierce brow Eric would hardly have recognised him. Bright and swift Eric strode up to him, and sword in hand he stood over the prostrate man, and the priest thought of the pictures of the archangel Michael, victorious over Satan.

"Where is my sister Thora?" demanded Eric.

Kolbiorn turned his head sullenly away and made no answer.

Eric's eyes flashed for one moment with a gleam of uncontrollable fury, but a softer look succeeded, and he said—

“Speak to your countryman, Kolbiorn, tell me where my sister is.”

Kolbiorn, who had expected his death-stroke, was amazed at Eric's gentleness, and almost in spite of himself he replied—

“I know not ; I never hurt her.”

“Tell me what you do know,” said Eric.

“She was with us in our vessel ; we were attacked and overcome ; what became of her I know not. I was sold as a slave.”

While this was going on some of the Northmen showed signs of impatience, and Wiglaf, ever on the watch to excite discontent, said—

“It is not well to parley thus with one against whom we have all sworn vengeance.”

Eric turned his flashing eye upon his follower, who quailed beneath it.

“Who has the right to dictate to his chief?” he said ; “this quarrel is mine, as Thora's brother.”

“Listen,” he continued, turning to Kolbiorn, “you have deserved death, and were

it not that I serve a merciful Master you would have had your due reward ; but I will pardon you on condition that you do your utmost to find Thora and restore her to her home. Will you come with us on these conditions?"

Kolbiorn could scarcely believe he heard aright, but when he became convinced that Eric was in earnest, he promised faithfully to do what he could to find Thora ; and on Eric's sternly charging his men on no account to hurt him, he entered the vessel, and they set sail for the north.

But this strange conduct, as it seemed to them, of Eric in sparing his most deadly foe still further alienated the minds of his men, inflamed as they were by the artful representations of Wiglaf.

As soon as they were a safe distance from the lands of the knight whose slave he had been, Kolbiorn begged Eric to let him be put on shore, for he could no longer support the hatred with which his countrymen regarded him, and which only Eric's authority kept in check.

He went, but even Siward was puzzled

by this last act of Eric. Brought up as they both had been to consider vengeance a sacred duty, Siward could imagine no motive which could account for Eric's extraordinary leniency to the man who had torn his beloved sister from her home, and who had endeavoured to destroy the castle of his fathers. What was it which had come over Eric? He had always been generous and more soft-hearted and merciful than was the wont of northern warriors, but such an instance as this Siward had never known, and though his faithful love forbade him to distrust his friend and brother-in-arms, he felt less than ever able to comprehend him.

One night there was a great storm at sea, the lightnings flashed, the thunder roared, the winds blew. Wiglaf's whispers had borne fruit among the men, and their countenances looked dark, and muttered threats reached the ear of Eric.

"Cast the enchanter into the sea. Thor is angry; his worship is neglected."

Soon an angry crowd rushed towards the priest and tried to seize him, but in a

moment Eric stood between with his gleaming battle-axe and flashing eye.

"What do ye, my men? None shall touch him while I live."

Siward and a few others stood by their chieftain.

"Seize him!" cried Wiglaf, "seize the accursed enchanter, he hath bewitched our chieftain; seize them both, they have despised our gods and deserted our worship."

Eric, whose chief care was for his guest, was unmindful of his own safety, never dreaming his own men would turn against him; but Wiglaf's counsels had worked, and with twenty stalwart Northmen upon him Eric was soon disarmed.

"Throw them into the sea," cried the treacherous Wiglaf; but a few who still loved their brave young chief—though they feared openly to take his part—proposed to cast them adrift in a boat. This idea was seized upon by the majority and instantly carried out.

Eric and the priest were placed in a boat, and with them Siward, who had not ceased to struggle for his chieftain until his arms

were pinioned, and who, Wiglaf thought, might prove a dangerous witness against him should they ever return to Sibert's neighbourhood.

Alone on the raging sea in the fragile boat, the three companions expected death every moment.

"Let us do what we can for our lives," said Eric, seizing one of the oars which, unknown to Wiglaf, had been placed there by some of the friendly Northmen.

The aged priest, who had been sorely wounded in the struggle, lay at the bottom of the boat nearly insensible.

"Oh, Eric," cried Siward, "is this what all our hopes of fame and glory are to end in? Why do you look so calm, so bright? is it indeed true that there is a spell cast over you by yonder old man? Were it not better to slay him at once, and so end it? though indeed it goes sorely against me to slay an insensible and defenceless man, were he ten times an enchanter."

"No, Siward, my faithful brother, there is no spell on me. I am but rejoicing at being counted worthy to suffer shame for

One Who suffered more than tongue can tell for me. But some day you shall know all, and the light shall shine upon you, and then all will be clear and bright, I trust and pray," and Eric rowed with all his strength, and he thought of the night on the sea of Galilee, when the Lord rebuked the waves and there was a great calm. And when he thought that this same Lord was his Lord, then too a wonderful calm spread itself over his soul, and his look was so bright and trustful amid all the din of the winds and waves, and the thunder and lightning flashing and roaring around them, that Siward marvelled more and more, and felt as though Eric possessed some strange supernatural power.

Thus passed the night, and as morning dawned the storm abated, and land appeared near them. It was hard to keep the boat from being dashed against the rocks, but both Eric and Siward had been accustomed to the sea from their childhood, and were skilful in all connected with it, and at last they ran the boat into a little cove where the water was comparatively smooth. There they landed their companion tenderly

and carefully ; and while Eric set himself to examine and tend his wounds, Siward wandered off to try to find a spring of water. He was successful in his search, and a draught of the pure water seemed greatly to revive the sick man. Eric and Siward consulted how they might shelter him for the night. At this moment a flapping of wings made them look upwards, and they saw Eric's faithful falcon hovering over them. It flew down and settled on his wrist.

"Now Heaven be praised for this good omen," exclaimed Siward ; "the noble bird hath not deserted her true master."

Eric stroked the head of his favourite, and smiled, well pleased, for she seemed to speak to him of home and of Thora ; and after the cruel desertion of his own followers the love of the dumb creature who had flown after him through the stormy night was comforting to his heart.

Presently Siward observed a fissure in the rocks, and entering it they found a dry and spacious cavern. Here they placed their wounded companion, and Siward cut some

long, straight wands, that he might make a bow to shoot some of the sea-birds, which seemed the only living creatures to be seen, and which, he thought, might serve them for food.

The brave old chief Sibert sat alone in his lofty hall ; shields gleamed upon the walls, the great logs blazed upon the hearth. The old chieftain felt sad and lonely ; his sons had all left him on various warlike errands, his daughter was lost. He felt his strength going from him, and he longed for some of his children to comfort his old age.

Suddenly the horn at the castle gate sounded. The old warrior started : could it be Eric, the bravest and fairest of all his sons, who had returned in answer to his unspoken wish ? Voices and steps were heard, the heavy oaken door swung back, and a maiden glided in, and clasped the old hero in her arms. It was his lost daughter Thora ! Joyful indeed was old Sibert at the sight of his long-lost child. He asked her many questions, but she said she could not answer him anything till he had granted

her one boon. "There was a wounded man without," she said, "who had once offended him. He must promise to pardon him for love of her, and then she would tell him how she had fared."

Sibert could refuse her nothing at such a moment, and he gave her his word that he would pardon the man, be he whom he might.

Thora made a sign to the attendants, and presently they led in a huge figure, pale and wan, with a shaggy red beard flowing on his breast.

"Kolbiorn!" cried Sibert, clapping his hand on his sword.

"Father," said Thora, "you have promised to pardon him; and see," she continued, "he took me away, but through all kinds of dangers he has sought me, and brought me safely home. He has been wounded in defending me. He begs your forgiveness for the wrong he did you. He has seen Eric, and he it was who sent him. Father, speak, and tell him you forgive him."

Sibert could not resist her gentle voice,

and he uttered the word which had seldom passed his lips before—"Pardon," and Kolbiorn threw himself at the feet of the old chief.

Then Thora told him how Kolbiorn had sought her out at Hilda's castle, and how she had consented to come with him, feeling sure that in no other way would he obtain pardon from her father, and reading aright Eric's wish. But before this they had tended him in the castle until his strength was restored ; and, softened as his heart had been by Eric's forgiveness, he had been ready to receive the Christian faith, and had been baptised.

The husband of Hilda had sent a vessel with Thora, but she had come alone from the shore with Kolbiorn, and on the way they had been attacked by a pack of wolves, and it was in defending her from these furious animals that Kolbiorn had been so much hurt that it was with difficulty they had reached the castle.

From what Kolbiorn had told her, Thora had gathered that Eric had been baptised, and deeply thankful was she for this ; but

she longed to see him—she longed to tell him how she had found Hilda, and of all the wonderful things she had learned whilst sojourning in that Christian household, how all that had seemed dim and uncertain was now made clear in the glorious light which had come with the knowledge of her Saviour Christ. Most of all she longed to share with him the precious hopes and aspirations which filled her heart and soul, for she knew there was no one who could sympathise with her and understand her as her dear brother could.

Sibert soon saw that a great change had passed over his daughter since he had last seen her. She had always been sweet and gentle, but now she was more so than ever before, and there was something about her which he could not comprehend. Kolbiorn had become a devoted follower of Sibert, and he looked upon Thora as almost above this earth. Many times he came to her to speak to her of his baptism, and to learn from her more than he yet knew of the holy faith in which he believed. To none but Thora could he speak of these things,

for they two were the only Christians in all that region. Kolbiorn was ignorant and unlearned, but he believed with all his heart, and Thora would often read to him from the Holy Gospels, a copy of which Hilda had given her. The word of God was very precious in those days, for there were but few copies of it, and all those were written by hand, and in that wild northern region they were more rare even than in other places, and Thora thought herself happy to possess so great a treasure and to be able to read it.

One day Kolbiorn appeared at the gate of the castle, and asked to see the Lady Thora instantly. She came quickly to him, and her heart sunk when she saw his face, for she knew he was the bearer of evil tidings.

"My father?" she asked; "is there aught amiss with him?"

"No, lady," said Kolbiorn, "I have not seen him; but as I was returning from the chase, passing a steep rock, I heard a groan, and when I went to see whence it came I found a man who must have fallen over the precipice, and who seemed to be dying. I

recognised one of Eric's followers whom I left in the vessel with him. I wondered at this, for I knew I should have heard if Eric had returned. I questioned him, but he would not speak. I then asked him for tidings for you, and he started and said, 'Is the Lady Thora at the castle?' and then turned away and groaned, but he would tell me nothing, and I left two of our men to guard him whilst I came for you, for I am sure he knows something which it is of importance for us to know, and perchance he will tell it if you ask him."

Thora looked very pale, but calm and resolved.

"I will come," she said; "but is he badly hurt? Had we not better take with us what may be necessary for his wounds?"

"It might be as well," he said; "but come at once, for I think he is dying. Eilif could follow with what you will require."

Thora and Kolbiorn made what haste they could, and at last reached the rock where the injured man was lying half supported by Kolbiorn's serving-men. It was a wild and savage spot, and it seemed as

though he might have lain there for many days without any one coming within hearing of his cries had not Kolbiorn happened to pass.

Thora knelt beside him and asked him where he was hurt, and if he could bear to be moved. At the sound of her gentle voice he opened his eyes and gazed at her listlessly, but a sudden flash of recollection came to him, and he shuddered and turned away, murmuring, "She has come to reproach me."

"No, Ulf," said Thora, who recognised him, "I have not come to reproach you, but to try and help you; but tell me what you know of my brother Eric, and of those who sailed with him."

"No, I cannot," he said, "you were always kind and gentle—I cannot tell you."

Thora turned so pale that Kolbiorn came quickly to support her, thinking she was going to swoon, but she commanded herself and spoke firmly.

"For pity's sake tell me, Ulf; I can bear to know the truth; is my dear brother slain?"

“Nay, I know not, lady ; the last time I saw him he was in a frail boat in a stormy sea. I cannot tell whether he lives or not.” And then, as if the effort of speaking had exhausted him, he groaned and became insensible.

His last words had given relief to Thora, who had feared a different answer. She examined his wounds, for like most of the ladies of those days she was skilled in **such** matters ; and then, seeing from the nature of the hurts that there would be no more danger in moving him than in leaving him where he was, which from the place being frequented by wild beasts would be dangerous during the night, she directed the men to carry him to her father’s castle. They did so, placing him upon some bear-skins which Eilif had brought.

Tenderly nursed by Thora, Ulf began to recover, and before long, with bitter self-upbraidings, he told her of the treatment their noble young chieftain had received. The further history of the expedition had been a sad one. Many a wild outrage had been committed under the guidance of the traitor.

Wiglaf; but he was not willingly obeyed by the undisciplined warriors around him, each of whom felt himself quite as worthy to be the chief: this led to disputes and frays; scenes of bloodshed and quarrelling became incessant, and sadly the nobler and better-disposed among them regretted their treason to their leader. Some of them left him, but only a few of them returned to their own land, and those few feared to approach the neighbourhood of Sibert's castle, lest by any means whispers of what had been done should have reached him, though, as they had but little doubt that Eric and his companions had perished in the storm, there seemed no means by which he could have heard of it; yet still they feared and kept away.

Thora wept and prayed for her brother, for she did not believe he had been lost in the storm. She felt a conviction that he was alive and would return, so she did not think it necessary to trouble Sibert's peace by repeating to him all her patient had told her. She was comforted to know that a messenger from the Most High had been with

Eric when he was abandoned by his countrymen, for she gathered that the stranger whom the Northmen feared as an enchanter was indeed a Christian priest.

Ulf was overcome with surprise at Thora's forgiveness ; it seemed to him very different where he himself was concerned from what it had appeared to him when he saw Eric pardon Kolbiorn. Yet he saw that Eric and Thora had both acted in the same way, and as he thought over these things in the long hours of sickness, he resolved to ask Thora to explain to him how it was. Softened by suffering and by self-reproach, the wild Northman listened to the Christian maiden, and so it came to pass that another convert longed for baptism in Sibert's castle, and Gudrun and Eilif, and others who were brought into daily contact with Thora, had their hearts prepared for the good seed.

It was a stormy night. The wild snow-storm was beating against the windows of the castle, the wind howled through the corridors, the heavy oaken doors creaked on their hinges. Suddenly a horn was

sounded at the gate. An armed warrior entered the hall. Thora started from her seat, for she saw it was Siward.

"Oh, Siward, where is Eric?" she cried, hurrying towards him.

"Lady, you have returned!" said Siward. "Now Heaven be praised for this! Eric was well when I left him, but he is alone on a desert island. I came to seek for succour, for without it we knew we should perish ere long. Eric would not leave the priest, who was dying, so I came alone in the little boat, which was all we had. I little thought I should reach here in safety, but by God's mercy I have been preserved."

"You too are a Christian, Siward," said Thora.

"I thank God that I am," said Siward reverently; "I could not be long with Eric without learning his faith, and loving it. The priest baptised me; he summoned strength for that holy office when we thought he could scarcely rise from his couch again."

"We must send help without delay; can

you guide them to the island?" asked Thora.

"Oh yes; if I had but a vessel we should be there in a few hours with a favouring wind. Your elder brothers?"

"They are absent. We must send to Kolbiorn, he will go gladly."

"Kolbiorn!" cried Siward, in wonder.

"Ah, you did not know; he is also now a Christian in belief, and longing for baptism, and whom would he succour if not Eric? But come in and rest awhile, you must be weary and hungry; when you have had some food you shall seek Kolbiorn; or stay, I will send Eilif at once, he can explain everything. My father has gone to a meeting of chieftains, and he may not be back for a day or two."

Poor Siward gladly agreed to her proposal, for he was quite exhausted and half famished. Thora told him how much she had suffered on account of Eric since she knew of the mutiny of his men, and how thankful she was to know he yet lived, and that she might hope to see him again.

Siward had many things to tell her: of

Eric's baptism, of the good priest who had gone with them, and who they now feared would die from the wounds he had received, and the hardships they had undergone so long on the island. He told Thora—and she was never tired of listening—of Eric's patience and sweetness, which had never failed through all their trials ; how he had always taken care of every one before himself, and never had seemed to think of what he went through himself, if he could help or comfort his companions. Siward's eyes filled with tears when he spoke of Eric, and he told Thora that he thought he was like the Angels of whom he so often spoke.

A few days after these events had been taking place at his father's castle, Eric was kneeling alone by the side of his friend. The priest lay with his hands crossed upon his breast, a solemn calm was spread over his features, he was sleeping the sleep of death. After praying earnestly for some time, Eric rose and went out to the sea-shore. He was alone now, no living creature was near him but his faithful falcon. The day before

there had been a great storm at sea, but now all was calm and still ; the rays of the sinking sun made a golden path over the quiet waters near him, the dark rocks rose in all their majesty, the wind was sighing gently in the tops of the pine trees. Eric looked along the golden path, and he thought of the holy life which had just been closed on earth—"the path of the just as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day ;" and he thought how the lives of Christians should be like golden paths leading to the Light which no man can approach unto.

His heart had so followed his guide and friend that he did not yet feel how sad it would be to be alone in this lonely island, with the wide sea flowing between himself and all those he loved, and with no human creature to speak to ; and, perhaps what he would feel more, nobody to care for and tend, except himself ; but he knew that he was not alone, that no Christian could be alone. He knew that his Lord had said, " If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come and make our abode with

him." He knew the holy Angels were with him, and the spirits of the faithful departed. Everything he saw around him was full of meaning to him ; when he saw the dark rock fling a shadow over the sand, he thought of the "shadow of a great Rock in a weary land," the smitten Rock from which the waters flowed for the healing of the nations. The wind in the pine trees made him think of the rushing mighty wind which filled the house where the disciples were sitting, at the holy feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon the infant Church. When a bird flew over his head he saw in its outstretched wings the sign of man's redemption, the holy cross. Then he knew too that, lonely as he was, his prayers for others would not fail to win an answer, and that so he might still be of use to his brethren.

So he sat watching the sea, and the sun sank, and twilight spread her soft, gray mantle over the earth, and then the fair moon rose over the dark sea, and Eric went to the other side of the little promontory,

where he had been sitting, to see how the waves "lay still to make a path for the moonbeams to tread upon." Eric listened to the gentle lapping of the water upon the beach and watched the silver path of the moon, and then, his heart full of peace, he returned to his watch beside the dead.

Early in the morning he heard sounds on the island beach. They were made by Siward and Kolbiorn who had arrived—were disembarking; they had met with many perils, and had been driven out of their course by the storm. Gladly Eric welcomed them, and together they committed the body of the priest to the earth. Eric sung over him one of the psalms which he had taught him, and then they knelt in prayer. After this duty was performed Eric accompanied them to the vessel, and in due time he returned to the castle of his father.

There is no need to tell of his joy and Thora's in being once more together. All they had gone through seemed as nothing in comparison to the blessing which their troubles had brought them. But Eric

could not rest until he had revisited the monastery where he had received baptism. There he was confirmed and admitted to the Blessed Sacrament, and from thence he brought another priest to perfect the conversions Thora had begun. In time old Sibert himself embraced the true faith, and many more of the wild warriors of that region. So several years passed away; when one night Eric was riding home by the shore. It had been blowing hard all day, and now the wind had risen to a gale, and the waves were dashing furiously upon the beach. Eric cast his eyes over the sea and reined in his horse, as he thought he saw a vessel in a dangerous situation. Calling his followers, they all ran down quickly to the beach, and were just in time to see the ill-fated vessel strike on a rock at no great distance from them. Hastily the stalwart warriors, who were as much at home in the sea as on land, slipped off their outer clothing and plunged into the foaming sea, and soon brought several of the struggling crew safely to land. Eric, who was a powerful swimmer, had rescued more than one, when

a cry arose that there was a man on the rock. "It is Wiglaf! It is our captain!" said one of the rescued men.

Eric started when he heard the name, and looked eagerly towards the rock, where the man could be seen clinging, with the waves dashing around him. A hand on Eric's arm made him turn, it was Thora. "I must go," he said, "it is Wiglaf."

"No one can reach the rock," cried one of the men, "the waves are beating on it, and will dash any man to pieces who attempts it."

"We cannot leave our brother to perish before our eyes," said Eric. "I think I could reach him."

"Nay, my dear master," said old Eilif, "you are already exhausted with what you have done; it will be your death, and will not save him either."

"Eric, you must not go," cried one of the younger warriors, "it is but that caitiff Wiglaf, who well deserves death for all his crimes, especially against you."

"That is what decides me," said Eric. Thora clung to him.

"I must go, my dear one, you know it is right," he said, looking down at her.

"Oh yes, you are right, I would not hold you back," said Thora, in a tone of anguish. "Kiss me before you go. God bless and guard you."

Eric clasped her in his arms and kissed her and blessed her, and then prepared to spring once more into the raging sea.

Thora sank on her knees where he had left her, and prayed. With straining eyes his men watched him struggling in the waters. He was well known to be by far the best swimmer among them, and if any one had a chance of success he had ; but the sea was very violent, and he was already spent with the exertion of saving the other men. Many times they lost sight of him and thought all was over, but he reappeared, and at length reached the rock in safety, and they saw him start on his return, and twenty strong men sprang into the sea to aid him in bringing his burden on shore.

Thora covered her face with her hands, for she could not bear to look, but she

heard shouts among the men, and then she flew towards them.

Alas, her brother was not there, only Wiglaf lay senseless in the arms of the man who had brought him to land.

"Where is Eric?" she cried. "You will save him."

A wave seemed to answer her cry and bore the form of Eric nearly to her feet. He was raised in the arms of the men and borne tenderly to the little chapel, which had lately been erected by the new Christians, and which was the nearest shelter that could be found.

Thora could not at first believe that her dearly-loved brother had gone to his rest; but so it was. Already exhausted as he was, his burden proved too much for his strength, and he lost consciousness and sank just as the first man reached them and seized Wiglaf. He could not see Eric, who had just sunk.

Thora knelt beside her brother and gazed at the calm, beautiful face of the dead. She could not feel sorrow as she gazed, all selfish feelings were lost in the thought of

his happiness, and she felt as though she could kneel there for ever; but Eric's example came to her mind and she rose, to comfort Sibert, who had lost his best-loved son; to tend Wiglaf, for she felt that as Eric had saved him from temporal death so she must try to teach him to win eternal life. In time her efforts were successful. Wiglaf's dark heart was touched when he knew that Eric, whom he had so injured, had died to save him; and in due time he learned how Eric's Master had died for His enemies, himself among the number, and he became earnestly penitent for his many crimes, and at length died a lowly brother in the monastery where Eric had been baptised.

Thora lived many years, known among all that region, which ere long became entirely converted to the Christian Faith, for the good works and alms-deeds which she did, and at length she fell asleep and rested near the brother she had so dearly loved.

Many years after a stately Church was raised where the little chapel had stood, by the graves of the brother and sister who had first brought the Christian Faith to that wild land.

Summary:

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**Bungay:**

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